

The Day Has Come by twowritehands

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Summary:

A morning in the Byers house leads to an epiphany for Joyce, post series.

The Day Has Come

Joyce couldn't find the store keys--again. She dug through the couch, flipping away the cushions. Next she plowed the coffee table, shuffling the catalogs and magazines. She found her lost lighter, but not the keys. "Dammit," she gasped.

Will emerged from the hallway, dressed and ready for school already. "Pop quiz today, probably. I want to study."

Joyce planted a kiss to his head. "Well, I can drop you off--if I can find my keys."

"I'll be in the car."

Pushing her bangs out of her face, she went to her oldest son's room. "Jonathan, did you see where I put the--o-oh my god!"

Her question broke in the middle when she knocked her way through the door and found *two* people in the bed. One her darling boy, the other, some girl in a lacy pink bra. The teenagers scrambled to cover themselves.

"Sorry!" Joyce backed out quickly, closing the door loudly, but shouting through the crack, "Sorry--who--who is that?"

She pressed a hand to her racing heart. This was certainly a surprise; she'd never even heard him say a word about girls. It had been a shock when he'd been arrested fighting over one, but Joyce had attributed it to erratic behavior brought on by everything else, because since then he's been his usual self. Or so she thought.

To say she had wondered if this day would ever come would be fairly accurate. Her face flamed, and she felt *relief* and *excitement* but also knew that as the mother she was supposed to be outraged (but why? He was eighteen now.)

Joyce wandered into the kitchen, belatedly noting that this was the first day in months her eldest wasn't up first, cooking. She should have gotten the hint. But honestly, she was just glad he had someone

in there with him this time. (Oh god, her intrusion last spring had taken *days* to smooth over.)

For several minutes, Joyce couldn't get her thoughts together enough to even remember what she had been doing. Store keys. Work. Yikes.

With a loud sigh, she called from a safe distance. "My keys, Jonathan? Have you seen them?"

"Check the couch!" he called.

"I did!" Joyce called, even as she dug through it one more time. This time she turned up change and Hopper's tie, which she straightened out and hung from the back of a chair for when she saw him later.

"The fridge?" Jonathan's out of frame voice guessed. Joyce cut a path to the kitchen, recollecting a hazy memory of taking this same route last night when she got in after 11:00. Her eye landed on the keyring tossed to the counter beside the refrigerator, lost between a loaf of bread and a box of pop tarts.

"GOT'EM!" she called. No answer. Though running late, she paused at the end of the hallway and looked at his door.

"Am I going to get at least a name?" she called.

"Um?" a flute like voice filled with the amusement of the mortified, "Nancy?"

"Nancy *Wheeler*?" Joyce cried. She hadn't recognized the girl without clothes on. She huffed with immense pride and repressed the urge to say *way to go Jonathan*. She did silently throw a victorious fist into the air. Then, she called down the hall,

"Hi, sweetie! I--I just, I saw so little I didn't even see your face."

The door swung open. Jonathan and Nancy both emerged fully dressed and still pink in the face. He shot Joyce a sharp, pleading look.

"Mom, you're going to be late," he said pointedly.

Ignoring that, Joyce scooped Nancy into a hug. "Come to dinner this weekend, okay?"

Nancy laughed sweetly, "Um, okay, yeah I'd love to."

Next Joyce scooped her son into a hug, asking softly in his ear, "You were safe right?"

She could feel the mortification in her son's tense frame. But he grunted an affirmative. She kissed his cheek, "Good boy."

"Mom," Jonathan pained. Outside, Will blew the car horn. Joyce relented. "Okay, *okay*,--" she turned to go but stopped and turned back, eyes on her son, asking lowly, "Oh, wait. Do you need me to pick up more, or?"

"Mom!"

She put her hands in the air, "I'm just looking out for you."

Giggling and blushing, Nancy covered her mouth. Jonathan was pink, too. Joyce sighed wishing she had time to make this less awkward. But the notion of Jonathan ending up with the same life she and Lonnie had made for themselves left her standing there, waiting for an answer. Maybe mom's weren't supposed to want to buy condoms for their sons. But Joyce had learned a long time ago when and when not to fight the tide.

Shifting her weight and reaching across herself to nervously grip her arm, Nancy Wheeler spoke up, "Thanks, but I, uh, I've got that base covered, Mrs. Byers."

"Okay," she said, giving up and really heading for the door now, "Bye kids. Don't be late for school. I'm working until 3 today, and Hop isn't picking me up until about six, so I can make you guys something to eat before we leave. Okay?"

"Sounds great, mom."

She flew out the door and found Will in the driver's seat. He looked up at her over the elbow he had propped casually in the open window. "Can I drive to the end of the lane? Please, please, please?"

Joyce's heart twisted in her chest. Where had her baby boys gone to? Suddenly she had little men. (Maybe that was why she was able to enjoy spending time with Hop; her babies needed her just a little less these days.) The thought at once filled her with pride but broke her heart. (She missed their squishy little baby faces.) Rolling her lips, she nodded at her youngest. "Yeah, sweetie. No *speeding*, okay?"

Will smiled hugely. Joyce settled in the passenger's seat with a business-like air. A deep breath, a feeling that everything was as it should be. She smiled. "Okay, Will Byers. Show me what you got."